

Exhibit No. 5

Date 2/19/15

Bill No. SB 342



Greater Yellowstone Coalition

America's Voice for a Greater Yellowstone | LANDS • WATERS • WILDLIFE

February 18, 2015

Montana Senate Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation Committee

Re: Senate Bill 342 - SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Taylor Brown and Members of the Senate Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation Committee,

We write to express the Greater Yellowstone Coalition's support for SB 342, which proposes revising certain laws related to bison management and defining the 'imminent threat' conditions under which the Montana Department of Livestock (DOL) can manage bison. We thank Senator Mike Phillips for introducing this legislation.

The Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC) is a regional conservation organization based in Bozeman, MT with offices in Idaho and Wyoming and over 40,000 members and supporters from across the country and within Montana. Our mission is to protect the lands, waters, and wildlife of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, now and for future generations. GYC has a long history of involvement with issues surrounding bison management and has spent more than 20 years working with landowners, agencies, and other organizations to find resolution to this issue.

The stated goals of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) include maintaining a wild, free-ranging bison population and reducing the risk of brucellosis transmission from wildlife to cattle. Over the last fifteen years the IBMP has been in effect, we have learned a lot about managing that risk of transmission. We have learned, for example, that bull bison are not a threat of transmission, and we have learned that the *B. abortus* organism has very limited viability in the natural environment. Consequently, federal and state agencies have taken steps to better manage the particular conditions under which transmission is most likely to occur instead of taking a blanket approach to managing bison that ends up in an unnecessary expenditure of time and resources and killing of bison and leads to intense and justified national and international criticism. This bill is one more step to better manage the risk of transmission, focus our limited resources and avoid unjustified killing of wild bison.

SB 342 recognizes that the factors and conditions under which potential transmission of *B. abortus* can occur are limited, and directs DOL actions to only those relevant situations, namely, to bison that are at risk of spreading the disease (cows), in locations where the transmission could occur (near livestock), and during a timeframe when transmission is of greatest concern. This reduces the burden on DOL and allows them to focus on a narrower management responsibility without risking livestock herds, and allows the DOL to be more effective in their actions.

We ask for your support of Senate Bill 342.

Sincerely,

Shana Dunkley
Wildlife Program Associate
Greater Yellowstone Coalition

SENATE AGRICULTUREExhibit No. 15Date 2/19/15Bill No. SB 342

--- Original message ---

Subject: Re: Bison Legislation and Property Rights**From:** Sabina V. Strauss <sabina@yellowstonebasininn.com>**To:** Mike Phillips <mikephillips@montana.net>**Date:** Thursday, 02/19/2015 11:07 AM

I, Sabina Strauss, Gardiner Basin resident & business owner, member & representative of the Bear Creek Council, am frustrated that my and others' private property rights are not being respected. I, my family, friends, neighbors, and customers LOVE having all wildlife on our 5 acre property. We especially enjoy the bison. There are no cattle in our neighborhood, therefore there is no imminent threat of brucellosis. There is also no threat of danger to people, as we've had bison on our properties before and learned to coexist. There is also no threat of property damage as long as the bison are allowed to pass thru on their own (they never stay more than several hours); property damage only happens when the bison are being hazed. All I ask is that my private property rights are respected.

While I understand that property rights are part of our bison 'issues', the most important problem we have, that needs to be fixed, is that our bison are not managed as valued native wildlife by MTFWP. While I can't vote for you, I would go and testify (and what ever else was needed) come hell or high water to have our bison managed by FWP as wildlife (just like the elk).

Thank you, Sabina.